

/13 cont. /

781 guayere /sic/ laden with fruit or with a deer across his back,
155 he comes also with his soul impregnated by nature, which later the magic of his imagination transforms in a thousand ways during the shadows of the night and which he later gives birth to in the form of tales and legends, saturated with phantasmagorias.

155 To understand well the great assimilation of the Indian with nature, we must bear in mente that metamorphosis, anthropomorphism, and animism form, to put it one way, the basis of his mentality, more imaginative than logical.

30. Wise ethnologists have already noted that primitive peoples, who live in an environment of wild and untamed nature, as yet not in the domain of mankind, undergo an extraordinary development of the imagination. And, therefore, if of all it is said that imagination is "the madwoman of the house," when we speak of the Indians we must say that imagination is "the mistress and absolute owner of their soul."

From this great predominance and overflowing of the imagination onto the other intellectual and volitive faculties, I believe to be derived all the moral defects and aptitudes previously listed as being of the Indians: inconstancy, short-sightedness, moral weakness, good humor, simplicity, brotherhood.

● 774 The imagination of the Indians, in its facet of fear,
155 sometimes terror and panic, populated the clouds with uaranapí, the hills with mauaritón, the mountains with piaimá, the waters with rató and tuenkarón, graves with orodán, hollow trees with amariuak, plains with seipán, and subterranean cavities with tiripuení.

776 Another of the great creations of the Indians' imagination is the Kanaimá, which we shall have to discuss in particular in another section of this work.

600 Here is complied with, to the letter, the famous phrase of the Latin poet, in which he says, "Primos in orbe terrarum timor deos fecit," for men's fear when faced with great natural

/96 cont. /

• 774 Correlative to this belief there exists among these Indians animism, which, like all the other -isms, more than a theory or elaborate doctrine, is a mental tendency which consists, as Grandmaison says, "of imagining everywhere, behind perceptible objects, life, activity -- by extension, will, powers, passions -- more or less traced from the human type, anthropomorphic." Thus also Mons. Valbuena says of animism, that it must be considered "not as a religious factor, at least in principle, but as an intellectual conception, as a general mentality."

776 b) These piá or -imá (call them genii, godlets, or numbers) are neither offended nor pleased by moral or immoral actions, but by physical actions -- sometimes substances -- which are damaging or pleasing to them or to their descendants.

753 To the native mentality true good things are this life and that which is related to it, health especially, food, etc.; and the bad things also true are illnesses /two plates appear here/ /97/ and pains and, especially, death, the most terrible and most feared evil, not so much because it is the unknown which opens into the beyond, but principally because of the loss of the good things and family so loved here.

775 To the Pemón there is no doubt but that the soul survives,
787 although this conviction is not deduced by them from logistic arguments, but from intimate personal experience and from very vivid imaginative impressions while asleep and in other states of exaltation.

756 c) Finally, we have in place of acts of worship various
788 observances, based on a belief in the afore-mentioned numbers
778 or potorí; in place of priests, the piaches; in place of prayer, the charms which we have already defined in another place, and, in lieu of the supernatural, the magical.

789 We would say once more that magic, although dealing with spiritual influences, is not religion; it does not deal with morality, but with physical acts, corporally maleficent or beneficent, psychic only insofar as the soul is united with the

VENEZUELA

THE KAMAINO (OMENS) OF THE PEMÓN INDIANS

The following article is by the Capuchin missionary Fray Cesáreo de Armellada who forms part of the Mission to which the Venezuelan government has entrusted the care of various Indian groups of the states of Zulia and Bolívar. The author has dedicated himself to the compilation and study of the "oral literature" of the Pemón Indians since 1931. Various of his works have been published previously in this *Boletín*. 114

In studying the mentality of these Pemón Indians, we come up against this word *Kamainó* which literally means "he who or that which means", and which in use is equivalent to our "oracle" and "omen". For them, our futures are present times which keep approaching until they are before our eyes; but sharp-sighted eyes or an oracle can go forward to meet them like a bird, who soaring at a certain altitude sees coming what we yet cannot see. [787] [192]

The spirit liberated from the body during a dream (according to their belief) and the *piache* when he is in a trance and also free from the bodily enclosure through the use of vegetable drugs, are the great *kamainó* or oracles. And dreams should be considered as the commonest omens or predictions. Dreams are always interpreted on the basis of similarity, which is the great principle and the great error of these Indians: to think that the similar has an effect upon the similar (e. g., a leaf shaped like a deer's ear, into the deer); that the name and the image are the thing named or represented not only in language or in art, but also in the field of chance; that sickness of one member of the family will necessarily and physiologically have a repercussion on all of the relatives, etc. [774] [828] [278]

Here we limit our study to certain natural occurrences which many times we have heard the Pemón Indians interpret as omens or warnings of things that are going to happen. I have always asked, how can a spider know this, how can a chicken know more than we do. And the answer were always the same: "truly it is strange, but so it is". [825]

The principal *kamainó*, heard interpreted as omens by the Indians during the years of our stay among them, are: [82]